portions of the beam to components of the diagnostic module 118. A holographic beam sampler, transmission grating, partially transmissive reflection diffraction grating, grism, prism or other refractive, dispersive and/or transmissive optic or optics may also be used to separate a small beam portion from the main beam 120 for detection at the diagnostic module 118, while allowing most of the main beam 120 to reach an application process directly or via an imaging system or otherwise. These optics or additional optics may be used to filter out visible radiation such as the red emission from atomic fluorine in the gas mixture from the split off beam prior to detection.

The output beam 120 may be transmitted at the beam splitter module while a reflected beam portion is directed at the diagnostic module 118, or the main beam 120 may be reflected, while a small portion is transmitted to the diagnostic module 118. The portion of the outcoupled beam which continues past the beam splitter module 121 is the output beam 120 of the laser, which propagates toward an industrial or experimental application such as an imaging system and workpiece for photolithographic applications.

The diagnostic module 118 preferably includes at least one energy detector. This detector measures the total energy of the beam portion that corresponds directly to the energy of the output beam 120 (see U.S. patents no. 4,611,270 and 6,212,214 which are hereby incorporated by reference). An optical configuration such as an optical attenuator, e.g., a plate or a coating, or other optics may be formed on or near the detector or beam splitter module 121 to control the intensity, spectral distribution and/or other parameters of the radiation impinging upon the detector (see U.S. patent applications no. 09/172,805, 09/741,465, 09/712,877, 09/771,013 and 09/771,366, each of which is assigned to the same assignee as the present application and is hereby incorporated by reference).

One other component of the diagnostic module 118 is preferably a wavelength and/or bandwidth detection component such as a monitor etalon or grating spectrometer, and a hollow cathode lamp or reference light source for providing absolute wavelength calibration of the monitor etalon or grating spectrometer (see U.S. patent applications no. 09/416,344, 09/686,483, and

09/791,431, each of which is assigned to the same assignee as the present application, and U.S. patents no. 4,905,243, 5,978,391, 5,450,207, 4,926,428, 5,748,346, 5,025,445, 6,160,832, 6,160,831, 6,269,110, 6,272,158 and 5,978,394, all of the above wavelength and/or bandwidth detection and monitoring components being hereby incorporated by reference). The bandwidth and/or wavelength or other spectral, energy or other beam parameter may be monitored and controlled in a feedback loop including the processor 116 and optics control modules 110, 112, gas handling module 106, power supply and pulser modules 103, 104, or other laser system component modules. For example, the total pressure of the gas mixture in the laser tube 102 may be controlled to a particular value for producing an output beam at a particular bandwidth and/or energy.

Other components of the diagnostic module may include a pulse shape detector or ASE detector, such as are described at U.S. patents no. 6,243,405 and 6,243,406 and U.S. patent application no. 09/842,281, which is assigned to the same assignee as the present application, each of which are hereby incorporated by reference, such as for gas control and/or output beam energy stabilization, or to monitor the amount of amplified spontaneous emission (ASE) within the beam to ensure that the ASE remains below a predetermined level. There may be a beam alignment monitor, e.g., such as is described at U.S. patent no. 6,014,206, or beam profile monitor, e.g., U.S. patent application no. 09/780,124, which is assigned to the same assignee, wherein each of these patent documents is hereby incorporated by reference.

BEAM PATH ENCLOSURE

Particularly for the molecular fluorine laser system, and also for the ArF and KrF laser systems, an enclosure (not shown) preferably seals the beam path of the beam 120 such as to keep the beam path free of photoabsorbing or other contaminant species that can tend to attenuate and/or otherwise disturb the beam such as by providing a varying refractive index along the optical path of the beam. Smaller enclosures preferably seal the beam path

between the chamber 102 and the optics modules 110 and 112 and between the beam splitter 122 and the diagnostic module 118 (see the 09/317,695, 09/594,892 and 09/598,552 applications, incorporated by reference above). The optics modules 110 and 112 are maintained in an atmosphere that is sufficiently evacuated or have an inert gas purged atmosphere. Preferred enclosures are described in detail in U.S. patent applications no. 09/598,552, 09/594,892, 09/727,600, 09/317,695 and 09/131,580, which are assigned to the same assignee and are hereby incorporated by reference, and U.S. patents no. 6,219,368, 5,559,584, 5,221,823, 5,763,855, 5,811,753 and 4,616,908, all of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

GAS MIXTURE

The laser gas mixture is initially filled into the laser chamber 102 in a process referred to herein as a "new fills". In such procedure, the laser tube is evacuated of laser gases and contaminants, and re-filled with an ideal gas composition of fresh gas. The gas composition for a very stable excimer or molecular fluorine laser in accord with the preferred embodiment uses helium or neon or a mixture of helium and neon as buffer gas(es), depending on the particular laser being used. Preferred gas compositions are described at U.S. patents no. 4,393,405, 6,157,162, 6,243,406 and 4,977,573 and U.S. patent applications no. 09/513,025, 09/447,882, 09/789,120 and 09/588,561, each of which is assigned to the same assignee and is hereby incorporated by reference into the present application. The concentration of the fluorine in the gas mixture may range from 0.003% to 1.00%, and is preferably around 0.1%. An additional gas additive, such as a rare gas or otherwise, may be added for increased energy stability, overshoot control and/or as an attenuator as described in the 09/513,025 application incorporated by reference above. Specifically, for the F_2-laser, an addition of xenon, krypton and/or argon may be used. The concentration of xenon or argon in the mixture may range from 0.0001% to 0.1%. For an ArF-laser, an addition of xenon or krypton may be